

Washington, DC – Southern New Mexico Congressman, Harry Teague, will travel to Albuquerque this Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, to host a roundtable with healthcare and service providers to discuss the status of veteran and military mental health programs. Participants will include representatives from the 377<sup>th</sup> Medical Group at Kirtland Air Force Base, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and various Veteran's Service Organizations. The meeting will examine post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mental health care in the military and how to best implement new provisions signed into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). They will also discuss other steps organizations may be taking to curb substance abuse and suicides in the military. Congressman Teague will be available to visit with media following the event.

In an effort to improve quality of life for returning combat veterans and ease the adjustment to civilian life, Congressman Teague introduced the Kyle Barthel Veterans and Service Members Mental Health Screening Act in May of 2009. The bill, named in honor of a Las Cruces man who struggled with PTSD and ultimately took his own life after returning from combat, called for mandatory and confidential mental health assessments for service members. In the fall of 2009, the NDAA established a mandatory post-deployment mental health assessment that provides face-to-face screening between a soldier and a mental health practitioner to all troops 60 days before deployment and upon returning from combat, a program Congressman Teague advocated for in his legislation. Congressman Teague is a member of the U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

### **Albuquerque**

**WHAT:** Veteran Mental Health Roundtable hosted by Congressman Harry Teague

**WHERE:** New Mexico Veterans Hospital, 1501 San Pedro S.E. (Lobby of Building #41)

**WHEN:** Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, interested media should arrive at Noon

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